

Garden Wise TV Episode 19: Microbial Life

In this Garden Wise episode, local experts share insight on different ways to ensure your garden is beautiful and sustainable. You will learn proper plant nutrition and composting, how to check your irrigation water pressure, and how to use an online tool to help you select the best plants for your garden.

Billy Goodnick kicks off the episode with a visit to Island Feed and Seed in Goleta to learn about what to do if you've removed your lawn and are replacing it with a low water using, ornamental landscape. Garden specialist, Brent Turntell, emphasizes the importance of microbial life when replacing and revitalizing your garden.



Did you know that if you scrape your lawn off (such as sod-cutting), you take away about 80% of the lawn's microbial life? Microbial life is the microscopic life that breaks down nutrients in the soil in order to create a healthy soil food web and ecosystem that is essential for plants to grow healthy and strong. Turntell describes various methods and supplements you can add to help stimulate your garden soil.



So, how do you actually get the fertilizer into the soil? Grab a hard rake and rake the fertilizer into the top several inches of the soil, and then cover it with mulch. For smaller projects, mulch can be found at Island Feed and Seed or other local nurseries. For bigger projects, it is more economical to go to a bulk mulch yard or through the [Santa Barbara County Mulch Program](#).

Next, Sam Dickinson walks us through the steps to collect kitchen and yard waste to make your very own compost. Dickinson explains what food scraps can go in your kitchen collection container and where to find Earth Machine Compost bins for your back yard. Dickinson walks us through the steps to cultivate your compost. After a few months, the compost will be ready to put it in your garden to nourish your plants and soil. Compost is important because it conserves landfill space, conserves water by holding moisture in the soil, and closes the loop because you are adding organic material from your own property back into your beautiful garden!





After Dickinson’s compost tutorial, Goodnick moves on to guide viewers through using the [Water Wise Plant Database](#), one of the popular resources available at [WaterWiseSB.org](#). Did you know that you can create a personalized list of plants that best fit your garden’s needs? Goodnick focuses on elements of design to build your dream garden and to ensure it functions as you intend it to. The database can answer questions about the plant’s anatomy, appearance, and culture.

Finally, Water Conservation Specialist, Cathie Paré, guides us through proper pressure management for irrigation systems. Paré emphasizes the importance of having the right irrigation system pressure: high pressure will cause misting, reducing the ability of the water to get to the soil where the plant need it. Low pressure will result in poor distribution and dry spots in your garden. Paré demonstrates checking your pressure with a pressure gauge and the necessary tools to help get your irrigation back to the perfect pressure.



Remember, we as individuals are all capable of creating positive change in our community and having a beautiful, efficient, water wise garden is part of the puzzle. Learn more by visiting our website [WaterWiseSB.org](#).

